

Overnight success stories? Don't believe the hype



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There are no overnight success stories. It's all about grinding out consistent sustainable growth. The secret is not to be distracted from what truly matters, says Jane Christian, UK Head of Business Science at MediaCom.

Our lives are driven by the constant search for the new, the exciting. But great businesses are not created by distraction, by the fickle flicker of a new opportunity: they are the product of a relentless focus on what works.

Even among the biggest companies, the ability and determination to stick with something and wait for it to work – the long-term view of things – is definitely something we don't see

enough of.

There are hundreds of little things that drive growth. But if there's one thing I've learned it's that nothing happens instantly. You have to stick at it for the long term if you want to get results. As business advisors, we know that saying "what you're doing is spot on – just carry on" isn't a hugely popular message in the world of instant gratification, but the numbers often back it up.

The latest ['Brand Footprint' report](#) from Kantar World Panel, for instance, shows that, while there are lots of differences about the maximum amount of penetration you could get in different markets, maintaining a steady 1% increase year on year is enough to drive significant growth.

That's not that easy because our research says *just standing still* takes a tremendous amount of effort. We don't pat ourselves on the back for that, despite the fact that it means a brand overcame all of the potential losses to competitors who were constantly working to steal share.

As my colleague Chris Binns (MediaCom's Chief Strategy Officer, Global New Business) constantly reminds me, companies brands often thought of as overnight success stories (like BrewDog, Popchips or Fever Tree, for example), are often nothing of the sort. More often than not, it's taken them years to get to the point where they've entered the public consciousness.

They've likely succeeded by being consistent in their approach to distribution and product development, as well as focusing on the many small, often ignored, elements of marketing that are almost guaranteed to help you deliver growth.

Let's take just one example that our industry should be good at, persistent creative or branding devices – that could be an image like Alexandr Meerkat, a running gag like "should have gone to Specsavers", or a jingle. These are things that work over time. System1 have done a lot of [research in this area](#).

If you look at successful brands, you'll often find that they use a persistent device, and the very successful ones were the ones that used the device well beyond the initial ad.

Today, however, even successful devices, are often restricted to the TV spot. Even in online video, the persistent device gets dropped quite quickly and the chances of it making it to CRM or email marketing are negligible.

Great brands build memory structures through persistent devices that allow us to choose them, automatically and without effort. But how many brands truly apply these learnings that are proven to drive growth? Not many.

Marketers are obsessed with new things, but most human beings are not. We want something that feels fresh yet is familiar to us at the same time. Maybe like Alexandr Meerkat, but in a new scenario. We don't want to see the same gag every time; we want to see it reinterpreted. Such tweaks keep us interested while also allowing us to link up the brand from one occasion of seeing it to another.

The sad truth is that even though these devices work really well (and are proven to do so), we're using them less and less. And even when they do work, we are changing them too frequently, every year often.

We should be sticking with them and evolving these ideas to retain interest and benefit from the work that has gone before. But we rarely do, failing to give them the chance to be built into our memory structures.

It's just one example of our failure to grind it out for the long-term. As with many of the other ingredients of long-term growth, the theory is well known but the practice is ignored. The bottom line is that long-term growth is there if you want it and are willing to follow the rules. You just have to be determined not to be distracted.

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